

† Legends  
of Saints &  
Birds. 

BY A. A. HILTON

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SAINT CUTHBERT'S BIRDS



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London: WELLS GARDNER, DARTON & CO., LTD.,  
3 Paternoster Buildings, E.C., and 44 Victoria  
Street, S.W.



To my Grandmother





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# S. Kentigern



SAINT KENTIGERN.

# Saint Kentigern & the ROBIN



**I**N days of yore the holy man Servan lived in that northern part of Scotland among the people called Picts. His home was at Culross, overlooking the blue waters of the Firth of Forth.

To his cell little lads were wont to come for learning. He taught them to love God and their fellow-men; to love also the beasts and birds and flowers which God in His mercy and goodness has created to gladden the hearts and eyes of the dwellers upon earth. He would tell them how God grieved when He saw His animals cruelly used—the asses and oxen driven by cruel blows, the birds caught in snares, and the fair flowers pulled up and

## S. Kentigern

trampled underfoot in wanton mischief. For it was an ox and an ass, he bid them remember, that first saw the little Christ child. It was our Blessed Lord Himself who said that even a sparrow should not fall on the ground without the Father, thereby showing the Fatherhood of God to be over all His creatures ; and of the flowers our Lord said that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed in such beauty as the lilies of the fields. Wherefore, said Servan, we ought so to live that we kill not nor hurt any living creature needlessly, for though man alone is made after the Divine image, yet each beast and bird and flower hath in it somewhat Divine, for it is the work of Divine Hands. How great a sin, then, he would say, rests on those who, not for food nor having need, wilfully destroy God's handiwork !

Now, one day when Servan was saying matins he heard angels singing ; it seemed to him that their voices sounded as if they sang down by the sea. Therefore, when he had done the office he left his cell, wandering down to the shore, so that, perchance, he might see these heavenly visitants, whose sweet voices had so charmed his ear. But nought did he see but the waves, and nought met his ear but the sound of their lapping as they rolled to and fro over the sand. Then Servan waited, for, thought he, may be the angels will sing

## And the Robin

again, and he listened. At last he heard a faint cry, and it was not the cry of the seabirds nor the song of the angels, but the wail of a tiny baby. So Servan searched until he came upon a young mother rocking her child to rest. The little one wept, and the girl-mother's tears fell also. When she saw Servan she would have fled.

But Servan's heart was filled with great tenderness towards all those who were weak and sorrowful, and, hearing that they were homeless, he bade the girl come to his cell, where she and her child should rest and be fed. At that she raised her sad eyes to his face.

"Wherefore dost thou scorn me not?" she said. "Men have dealt hardly with me hitherto."

Then Servan smiled.

"I serve Him whose daughter thou art," he said; whereat she marvelled, for did this man indeed know her father's name?

And she trembled, for her father was King of the Picts, and had bade her go from him because she had sinned, and she dreaded lest he should find and slay her and her child. But Servan spake of her heavenly Father.

Then he led them to his cell, feeling glad and happy that the angels' song had taken him to the seashore, and he made the girl and her baby welcome for the sake of

## S. Kentigern

the Blessed Mary and her sweet Son. So they stayed with Servan, who taught the girl the faith of Christ; then he baptized them, calling her Tanca and the baby Kentigern. But as little Kentigern grew older Servan loved him so dearly that he called him "Mungho," which means "dearest," to show the love he bore him.

Now the other lads at Culross grew jealous of Kentigern, because they knew that Servan loved him, and they sought some means whereby they might hurt him. They forgot the old man's teaching, so powerful for evil is this spirit of jealousy; they did not remember that Servan loved Kentigern because he had taught him since he was a helpless baby, and that Kentigern had no one whom he might call father. Nor did they remember how just Servan was to them all, giving praise or blame where it was due, showing no preference, for in their hearts they knew that Kentigern was loved because he deserved to be, and this knowledge did not please them.

At Culross was a robin, and this bird was tame, as robins oftentimes are. It would eat from Servan's hand, and was wont to perch on his shoulder. While he sang the psalms of David the robin would twitter and flap his wings after the manner of birds when they are pleased.

Servan loved the little redbreast, and told the boys how, when our Blessed Lord hung on the rood, it was

## And the Robin

said that a small bird tried to staunch the blood flowing from His wounded side, so evermore this bird—the robin—bears the stain of the sacred blood on its own soft breast.

But these boys, thinking how best they might hurt Kentigern and make Servan angry with him, agreed to kill the robin, afterwards saying that Kentigern had slain it, therefore they wrung the neck of the little bird.

When Kentigern came into that place where the boys were wont to play he found the body of the robin—the little head hanging limp, the bright eyes closed, the pretty red breast all dusty and bedraggled. He took it in his hand, wondering what evil chance had befallen it, grieving as he thought how sad Servan would be when no redbreast hopped to greet him when he came from church. While he stood thus, one and another of the boys passed by.

“See,” they said, “how Kentigern has killed the robin!”

Then was Kentigern minded to fight them, for he knew they accused him wrongly; but his eyes turned to the red feathers, and he thought of our Blessed Lord who was put to death for the wrongdoing of others, so instead of hitting the lads he fell on his knees and prayed. And he prayed, if it might be, that God, with

## S. Kentigern



whom all things are possible, would give life to the bird ;  
and he made the sign of the cross over the little body



## And the Robin

lying in his hand, when, behold, the small wings quivered and the eyes opened, and soon the robin was preening his ruffled feathers.

Now, it would be too long a tale to tell how Kentigern grew up, and how when this robin died from old age other birds came to sing with Servan when he chanted the psalms ; but this much shall be told, which is, that when Kentigern was come to man's estate he was called to be Bishop over Strathclyde or Cumbria on the west coast of Britain. Here he laboured long and well. To this day churches in Cumberland are named after him for his honour. To Wales, too, he went ; he was driven there by one who usurped the throne of Strathclyde. In Wales he lived with S. David, until the Prince of Denbigh gave him lands whereon he built the monastery of Llan-Elwy. Then, when he went back to Cumbria, he left one called Asaph as head over Llan-Elwy, and S. Asaph it is now called after him, to whom Kentigern gave the charge when he returned to his bishopric of Glasgow.

And this is what Kentigern said to the monks of Llan-Elwy ere he left them : " Do you therefore, most beloved ones, stand firm in the faith, quit you like men and be comforted, and seek always that everything be done in charity."



S. Milburgh



# The Birds of S<sup>t</sup>: MILBURGH AND some others.



HERE are three Saints who have their days in February who, like Saint Servan of Culross, loved birds.

Their names are Aventine, Baldomer, and Milburgh. Aventine, indeed, loved all creatures so dearly that it is told of him even that one day, when he trod upon a snake and crushed it, he bent over it, cherishing it until life returned and it glided away.

He lived in the sixth century, being Abbot of a monastery in France ; this monastery was at Troyes. He used to spend all the money he could collect in redeeming captives, and one day it chanced that a band of soldiers

## S. Milburgh

passed through Troyes bearing with them a captive boy. Aventine, liking his gentle face and pious mien, gave them money for his ransom, and they left the boy behind when they pursued their journey. He was called Fidolus, and to him Aventine taught the Faith and made him a monk, loving him as if he were his son.

Then, when Aventine grew old and would rest from his labours, spending his last years in prayer ere he should be called from the earth, he left the monastery to the care of Fidolus, whom the monks liked well, and retreated to the forest.

Here he lived for many years in quiet contemplation, having the birds and beasts for his friends. A monk from the monastery used to bring to the old man what food he had need of, but ofttimes, in dipping his pitcher into the river for water, tiny fish would get caught therein. These Aventine would take back to the river, for he would neither hurt nor destroy any creature save from necessity. And the animals knew this, and loved the gentle hermit; so that stags chased by the hunters would take refuge in his cell, while Aventine protected them from their pursuers.

Now, one night there came a bear to his cell and beat at the door as though it would have broken it down. It was a stormy night, and the noise of the rain and the

## And some Others

sobbing of the wind in the tree branches mingled with the roar of the beast outside. Aventine was an old man and a feeble, so he made fast the door and prayed that the fury of the beast—as he thought—should not be allowed to harm him. And the night passed and the storm ceased, while the faint streaks of dawn showed in the eastern sky ; then did the hermit unbolt his door, and behold, on the threshold lay the bear, quiet and still.

Now, when he saw Aventine he crouched at his feet, and then began to lick them in token of goodwill ; then he raised one of his huge paws, looking at the hermit as much as to say : “ Why, master, didst thou bolt thy door against me ? ” And Aventine saw that embedded in the great pad of his foot was a cruel thorn ; wherefore he was sorry that he had bolted his door against the bear, and said : “ Poor beast ! thou wast in pain and didst seek relief, while I thought thou wast raging for my life.”

Then he took the paw and, holding it, drew forth the splinter, the bear suffering him gladly ; then he bathed the wound and bandaged the paw, and soon the bear limped back into the forest.

When Aventine ate, he used to break some of the bread into small crumbs ; these he held in his hand, and

## S. Milburgh

all the birds in the forest would fly to him, perching on his fingers or head and shoulders with fluttering wings and much chirping.

Each day the birds ate of his breakfast and sang their songs of praise ; and when the last crumb had been swallowed they would fly to the tree branches and there sing their thanksgiving, so that the forest glades re-echoed with the antiphons of the feathered choir.

These things did the hermit, for the love he bore towards all creatures.

Saint Baldomer, too, fed the wild birds with crumbs, saying, " Eat, little creatures, eat and praise the Lord," while they came full of trust, and perched on his fingers. Now, Baldomer was a blacksmith, who lived at Lyons. He led a simple life, being, says one who wrote of him, " in chastity clean, in friendship firm, in charity benign, in reading intent, in watchings solicitous, in almsgiving prompt."

So that we see how those who incline to love God's creatures, being tender towards the birds and beasts, are also imbued with other graces, keeping His commandments by living in purity, being faithful in friendship, loving their neighbours, being charitable in almsgiving, reading the Scriptures. For it seems that if men have mercy and compassion for the weakest of God's



## And some Others

creatures, they must of necessity learn to love all that He has made, being filled with Charity to all mankind.

And now we come to Milburgh, who is of our own country.

She was the eldest daughter of Merewald ; Domneva was her mother's name. From her earliest years Milburgh loved God ; in her work and in her play the child sought to do all to His honour ; she loved our Blessed Lord, and wished to live but to do Him service. Therefore, when she grew up she sought not the pleasures and attractions of the world, which she counted as nought, being, she thought, hindrances to the worship of God, for those whose minds are filled with worldly desires do not long after heavenly things.

So Milburgh, who wished to devote herself both body and soul to her Lord, went to Wenlock in Shropshire. Here she gathered round her maidens like unto herself, and founded an Abbey for religious virgins. She was a wise and gentle mother to her spiritual daughters ; under her rule the Abbey prospered exceedingly.

She was very humble, for it is ever the best of God's servants who are least precious in their own sight, and this humbleness made her like unto the modest violet which hides its head beneath its leaves, yet sends forth a sweet fragrance to gladden the hearts of the passers by.

## S. Milburgh



Even so from the saintly life of Milburgh emanated a fragrance which helped and strengthened all those who

## And some Others

came nigh unto her. She was able, by God's grace, to give light to the blind and life to the dead ; not only did she restore bodily gifts, but spiritual as well, leading those who walked in darkness to the true light, and others from the death of sin to a life of righteousness.

Over the fowls of the air, too, she had a strange power ; the birds loved her. When she called they would come circling and swooping around her : the small sparrows, the soaring lark, the robin redbreast, the chaffinches and tits.

Round her feet the starlings would hop, ever busy, while the thrushes sang to her and the blackbirds piped cheerily.

The rooks, too, chattering to each other as they put their babies to bed in the untidy homes they had made in the trees, all seemed to know and love her. The wood-pigeons would coo to her and to each other ; you may hear them to this day in Shropshire and Wales telling the Welsh folk to steal the Englishmen's cows, saying :

“ Take two coos, Taffy,  
Take two coos, Taffy,  
Two-o.”

In Cumberland, too, they say the same, thinking perhaps of the days when Britons lived there, and there

## S. Milburgh

were great fights between them and the strangers who came to their shores.

Now, Milburgh loved the wood-pigeons, although they said that, and she felt sorry that they were wont to devour the tender young corn in the fields and eat the cabbages in the poor folk's gardens.

So each day she fed all those pigeons who came to the Abbey, and they became her pensioners, leaving—so long as she lived—the young cabbages and tender corn to grow strong and large, meet for the food of man.

Thus lived Milburgh until the time for her death drew near, when she gathered together the Sisters, telling them that death had called her, and besought them to have ever before them these two sayings :

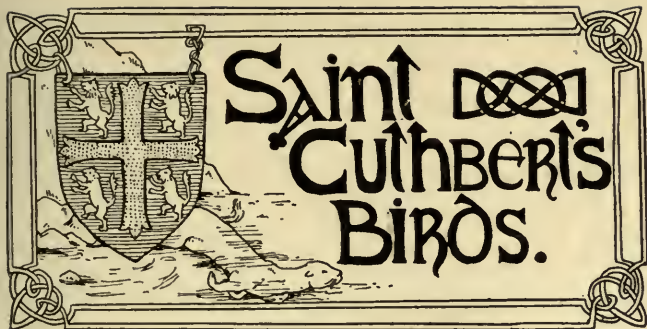
“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.”

Then she died in peace.

S. Cuthbert's Birds





IN the seventh century a little lad kept watch over the sheep in the valley of Lauderdale. This valley, which is in the country we now call Scotland, was in those days part of the kingdom of Northumbria.

Now, the shepherd boy was called Cuthbert. He was left an orphan when but a tiny babe, and a good woman watched over his childhood.

He was a strong child, and tales are told of him how he delighted to walk on his hands and turn somersaults, as boys will. As he grew older he was chief among the lads of his own age in running, jumping, and wrestling; he practised these arts meaning to be a fighting man,

## S. Cuthbert's Birds

which of a surety he was, yet not in the way he dreamed when wrestling with the other lads in Lauderdale. For one night, as he watched among his sheep, he knelt to pray. The night was dark and overcast, no light from moon or stars; but suddenly Cuthbert perceived a ray of light which grew brighter and brighter, while upon this ray angels descended. The boy gazed, scarce believing his own eyesight the while the light continued. Then he saw these angels ascending, bearing with them one whom seemingly they had come to meet; and from the one who was with them also issued a heavenly light. Then Cuthbert wondered what this vision might portend. In the morning he was told how the holy Aidan of Lindisfarne had died during the night, so he judged he had seen the Bishop's soul with the angels. Henceforth he was filled with a desire to become like unto him; so he went to Melrose, where novices were taught. Here he became the beloved pupil of the Abbot Eata. Nor is that wonderful, for Cuthbert, in his vigorous body, had a strong mind and a great desire to serve his Lord faithfully. He would walk to and fro among the people, seeking to win the heathen to Christ, preaching to and confessing those who were in the faith. No storm daunted him. In the wild, rough days of the drear November or through the deep snows of winter he would



## S. Cuthbert's Birds

cross the moors alone to the distant glens and valleys where he might win even one soul to Christ. Often hungry, often thirsty, sometimes so weary that scarce could he struggle on, yet he never turned back. Among those outlying hills and dales were those who, professing Christ in name, were apt to fall again into idolatrous ways, and to them Cuthbert went forth.

He, too, like Servan of Culross and many another saintly man, loved animals and birds. It is told of him how one night he went out to pray, as was his wont oftentimes, and another monk followed him to see the reason thereof.

He found Cuthbert kneeling nigh unto a stream praying ; and because the night was bitter and he had come through the wet grass, Cuthbert's feet were numbed and frozen by the cold. But presently two otters came from the water and licked Cuthbert's cold feet the while he prayed. They licked them until they were warm and dry, wiping them with their hair. Then that monk stole away, marvelling that Cuthbert liked to pray in the cold air instead of in his warm cell, marvelling also at the otters' kindness.

Now, when Cuthbert was not yet thirty, Eata became Abbot of Lindisfarne, taking Cuthbert with him as Prior. At Lindisfarne, as at Melrose, Cuthbert laboured with

## S. Cuthbert's Birds

the same zeal for the souls of his fellow-men. For twelve years he was Prior at Lindisfarne ; then he betook himself to a small island seen from Lindisfarne, and called Farne. None dwelt thereon, for it was said to be the haunt of evil spirits. But nought evil disturbed Cuthbert during his sojourn there ; instead, the wild birds dwelt with him, becoming gentle and familiar with the saint. To his influence folk attribute the tame ways of these sea-birds, for generations of them have shown friendliness to man since S. Cuthbert dwelt among them. But now folk seek to steal the nests and shoot the birds, forgetting the saint's love for them, forgetting also the promise that he made to them that men should not destroy their homes. " S. Cuthbert's Birds " they are called, and are not to be found in any other place in the British Isles. On the same island, too, are certain small shells which folk call " S. Cuthbert's Beads."

Now, Cuthbert did not withdraw to Farne to be away from mankind ; he used to receive people there, building a place where boats might anchor, and a refectory and guest-chamber for the pilgrims who came there to seek his aid.

Here many a sin and sorrow laden heart found comfort, going away cheered by the love and wisdom of the saint. Here also came Herbert, who was of all Cuth-

## S. Cuthbert's Birds

bert's friends the best beloved. Each year the priest Herbert left his island in the peaceful Lake Derwent-water to go to that other isle in the Northern Sea. Then would the friends join together in peaceful and loving converse, speaking of the joys of the life to come, while the great waves beat against the lonely rock.

Thus eight years were passed, until came the day when the King of the Northumbrians, with his nobles and almost all the community of Lindisfarne, came to Cuthbert, beseeching him to accept Episcopal dignity. He had no wish to leave his dear island, but at last he was persuaded to become Bishop, although it was to Lindisfarne where he had lived as Prior that he now went as Abbot and Bishop, and not to Hexham, which had been first offered to him.

Here, as Bishop, he worked as he had done when he was a monk, Prior, and hermit. As of old, he wandered over hill and dale, sleeping under the boughs of the trees ; for food, content with a crust of bread or the herbs of the fields ; for drink, the pure water of the streams. His friendships continued : those he had loved when a little shepherd boy he loved still, now he was raised to the dignity of Bishop. As in his childhood he had faithfully watched over his earthly master's sheep,

## S. Cuthbert's Birds

March 20<sup>th</sup>  
S. Cuthbert  
of Lindisfarne  
A.D. 687.



so in the prime of his age he was a loving shepherd to the sheep of his heavenly Master.

## S. Cuthbert's Birds

After celebrating the Feast of the Nativity in A.D. 686, he felt that the end was coming ; not for long would he be spared to labour in this world. He again withdrew to the quietude of Farne ; here he would breathe his last. The monks from the Abbey came often to see him during this long, painful illness, and Cuthbert himself gave them instructions for his burial. He told them to place his body in a linen cloth, which, he said, " I was unwilling to wear in my lifetime ; but out of affection to its donor, Verca the Abbess, favoured of God, I have kept it for my winding-sheet."

So he was laid to rest wrapped in the linen shroud given to him by his friend Verca. And on the same day and at the same hour that Cuthbert died his dear friend Herbert passed from this world.

Some time before Herbert had asked Cuthbert to pray to God to grant him the desire he had to die when his friend should leave this earth. Then Cuthbert had prayed that Herbert might have his wish : and, behold ! so it was, for though they never met again in this world, yet in the hour of death they were united—Cuthbert dying on that granite rock in the storm-tossed sea, Herbert closing his eyes in sleep on the peaceful isle in the quiet lake, surrounded by the wondrous beauty of the Fells.



Angus, Servant of God







**I**N Ireland in the ninth century there dwelt those holy men, lay-brothers of the monasteries, who are known as Culdees. "Servants of God" (Célé Dé) they called themselves, for were not they doing His work even though their tasks were humble and they gained no honour thereby. Not as the world counts honour, that is; for in the sight of God every work worthily done is pleasing to Him and honourable to the worker thereof, be it ever so lowly. And these lay-brothers served their Lord by taking care of His sick children—men and women loathesome with the scourge of leprosy,

## Angus, Servant of God

sore with wounds, wrapped in foul clouts ; these were the charge of the " Servants of God."

For few cared for the task of washing these poor creatures, few wished to bind their wounds, few even cared perhaps that they died untended, not cheered by hearing the Gospel Story. They were outcasts maybe for their own sins, or maybe for their fathers' they suffered ; but leprosy, like sin, is infectious and therefore to be shunned. Though it is to be feared that more folk shun leprosy than sin.

Now the Saints of God have ever been those who dared to heal the bodies and souls of their fellow-men. Following the example of Him the Sinless One, who was a Friend of sinners, who healed the sick on the Sabbath day, they too have been the friends of the sick and sin-laden souls, and to nearly every monastery a hospital was attached for the ill, the poor, and the lepers.

These hospitals were the care of the Servants of God ; there was such a hospital at Armagh, another at Clonmacnois, standing apart from the main buildings. Conn-of-the-Poor was the name given to the head of the Culdees at Clonmacnois, because he laboured among those who lacked the riches of this earth ; and to show how folk respected their work it is told that when the fierce Danes came to pillage Armagh they found there

## Angus, Servant of God

the little hospital of sick and dying poor, and spared the lives of the Culdees who ministered there.

But it is of Angus that I am going to tell you. Angus lived in the ninth century, and he, like many another man in the isle of Saints, was fond of learning.

When he was quite a young man, he was nigh to a place called Coolbanagher in Queen's county, and he went into the Churchyard to pray. While there he had a vision of angels surrounding a certain tomb there. He wondered what this might portend, and why this vision had been vouchsafed to him. Then when he came from the Churchyard he asked whose body lay in that grave.

"But a poor old man who dwelt in this place," he was told.

"What good work hath he done?" asked Angus.

"Nay," said the Priest, for of him Angus asked this. "I know of none, save that it was his custom to tell the names of the Saints of the world, so many of them as he could remember, at sunset and sunrise."

At that Angus said :

"Ah! he that should make a poem in praise of all the Saints would doubtless please God, seeing that the Angels take account of this poor man."

And he walked away, communing within himself as

## Angus, Servant of God

to whether *he* might not sing the praises of the Saints of God ; while the Priest gazed after him, wondering at his saying, for *he* had seen no Angel vision around the poor man's grave.

Then Angus set himself to study. Long he worked and hard, for he craved to praise his Lord in the lives of the Saints.

He was not a Culdee at this time ; perhaps he thought that God had set him a more noble task than to tend the Lepers or perform menial work, for the labour of the brain is counted by some to rank higher than that of the hands.

Be that as it may, at this time his whole heart was set upon writing this beautiful song of the praise of the Saints ; and from early morn to late eve he studied for this end.

In the fresh dewy mornings he thought upon the Saints ; the great sun rising into glory and warmth was to him a symbol of the way the Gospel, carried by the Saints, spread its warmth over all lands, sending light into dark places, melting cold hearts by its soft rays. In the evening, when the sky reddened in the west and the sun sank slowly, he still thought upon the Saints.

“ 'Tis the Light of the Gospel going to far places,” he thought, “ even as Columcille carried the message to Hii : as Columban told it to the people of Gaul.”

## Angus, Servant of God

The birds—for he loved the feathered songsters—sang to him songs of the Saints; the green grass of the Emerald Isle told him of their hopefulness; the white daisy blossoms of their purity; the red roses of their martyrdom. The mighty oak trees spake of their strength; all nature seemed to him to be singing the praises of the Saints.

Thus it was that after a time Angus became celebrated for his learning. He, thinking upon the Saints so much, preached about them, exhorting others to follow their example, to take the sweetness of those holy lives and make it their own, even as the bee gathers honey from the flower. And great company of people came to hear him whithersoever he went.

Now Angus was a humble-minded man: he loved to sing the praises of others, he rejoiced that he should have been, as he thought, set apart by God to tell the glory of the Saints; but when he found that folk came to hear him, thinking more of what *he* said than of those of whom he told them, he was troubled.

“Praised be *God* in His Saints,” he thought; “but these folk seek to glorify the creature rather than the Creator; and I, who am not even the least of His Saints, but a weak, erring man, receive praise of them.”

So he disguised himself and went secretly away.

## Angus, Servant of God

He came to the gate of a monastery at Tallaght, nigh to Dublin. Here he humbly begged leave to enter as a lay-brother ; he was willing, he said, to perform the most laborious tasks, all he asked for was to be admitted as a serving-man. Here he laboured faithfully and well, not, indeed, having to tend the sick as did most Culdees—for Angus was one of them now ; but having his work in the farmyard and the fields.

He cut the golden corn when the ripe ears were heavy with grain ; he bore the sheaves on his shoulders in harvest time to the granary ; his arm wielded the flail as he threshed the wheat.

He kept the birds away when the trees were laden with fruit, but he gave them of his grain when the snow covered the ground. And the birds loved him, and would perch on his shoulders as he worked, singing sweet songs to him ; or in the harvest time they would flutter round the granary, watching as he threshed the corn, knowing that a portion of it would be set aside for them. It is told how, chopping wood one day, he cut his hand and the red blood flowed, redder than the breasts of the robins perched near to him, and how the little birds crowded round him, uttering loud cries because their friend was hurt, for “ the little Redbreast teacheth Charitie.”

## Angus, Servant of God

But with all this labour he had no time for writing the praises of the Saints. He lived with the birds and beasts for his companions for seven years, just a humble serving-man, and though oftentimes his heart yearned to be at his study, yet he felt then that he was doing well to live as a Culdee.

It was on this wise that it was found that the habit clothing this poor lay-brother was the covering of Angus, that learned man whom crowds had flocked to hear.

One day, as he was busy in the barn, he heard the sound of bitter weeping. He looked round, wondering who the unhappy one might be, and at last, hidden beneath some straw, he found a little lad. The child was a scholar from the monastery school, who did not know his lesson and had hidden from his master. He raised his tear-stained face to Angus, and began to tremble, for he was frightened at being discovered. And something in the large tear-dimmed eyes lifted to his reminded Angus of a leveret he had once taken from a snare, so he spake gently to the runaway.

The child begged Angus to let him hide in that barn. "The lesson was hard," he sobbed, "and I could not learn it. I cannot understand great and difficult matters."

Then Angus was sorry for the child, for he was not

## Angus, Servant of God

clever, and so soon as he had part of his lesson perfect he straightway forgot it while he tried to learn the rest. He was willing to learn and did his best, but, indeed, as he said, "great and difficult matters were not for him."

"And if I know it not, I shall be beaten," he said, his lips trembling. "Many stripes have I already received. They think I am idle, though 'tis not so. But my brain gets a-weary of this learning."

And he drew his hand across his eyes. Angus looked at the spare little body and white face of the boy.

"Stripes will drive more learning from that clouded brain of thine," he thought, "than all the blows in the world will put into it." But aloud he said, "Come then, and see if I can teach thee thy lesson." And he held out his arms.

Then the child nestled to him while Angus bade him dry his tears and be comforted. Over and over again he crooned the lesson, softly singing to the child in his arms, and the weary look left the boy's face while Angus talked gently to him, and the difficult parts became easy when Angus taught him, so that presently he fell asleep, the tired brain lulled to rest by the Brother's crooning. But still Angus sang on, looking through the granary door to the sweet still world beyond while the boy slumbered.



## Angus, Servant of God

And Angus thought of the song of the Praises of the Saints which he yet had not written, wondering if, after all, he had chosen rightly.

“ For seven years have I laboured here, doing what even this child could do had he the bodily strength—yet hath God given me the brain wherewith to study.” And he was perplexed whether he ought to have hidden himself because of the praise of men.

Then the child awoke, for Angus had ceased his crooning. He gazed wistfully at the man.

“ Thou must be happy,” he said, “ to labour in the fields, with the dear birds to sing to thee.”

Angus smiled.

“ Yet would I be more happy were I studying,” he said.

“ Thou lovest *books* ? ” asked the child, amazed.

“ Yea, I love them.”

“ I love the beasts and the birds and the fields,” said the boy ; “ learning brings but pain.” And again that weary look came into his eyes.

But Angus bade him go to the school, as now he knew his task. The child went, and said his lesson, repeating it perfectly, and his master wondered how he came to know it so well.

Then the boy told of Angus.

## Angus, Servant of God

“He cannot be a serving-man,” mused the Abbot, “seeing he hath done wonders with this child, for no teacher hath taught him so well hitherto.” And he ran to the barn.

Well, there he found Angus, and knew he was the man whom all folk praised for his learning seven years ago, and he embraced him joyfully.

But he rebuked Angus for his false humility in hiding away from them all that time. “Thou hast not added to thy talent,” he said.

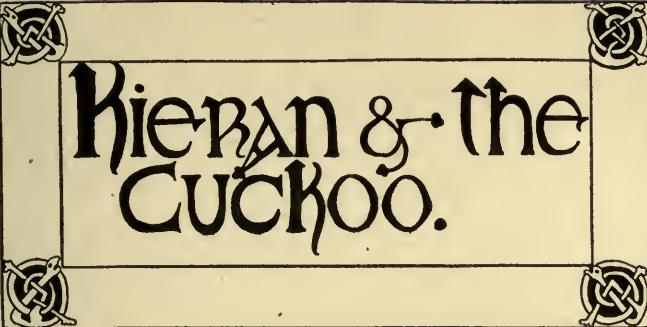
And Angus received the rebuke in silence, for he, too, had thought the same while the child lay sleeping in his arms.

So it was that Angus the Culdee returned to his study ; and in an old poem-written in praise of his learning he is called “The Bright Sun of the Western World.”

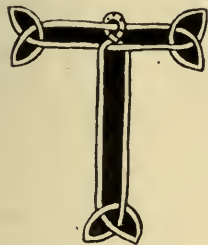


Kieran and the Cuckoo





# Kieran & the Cuckoo.



HIS is a tale of a Saint who lived in the sixth century. His name was Kieran, and by some he was called "the first-born of the Saints of Ireland."

Even when a little child he showed his love for animals. It is told how one day he wept to see a hawk circling above a little bird, then suddenly swoop down upon its prey. But bethinking himself that our Lord had promised even to remove mountains for those who ask in faith, he fell on his knees beseeching God to save that tiny bird. And the hawk opened its talons and the bird fluttered down to earth, frightened but unhurt,

## Kieran and the Cuckoo

while Kieran wept no more, but was glad that its life was spared.

When Kieran grew up he went into a lonely place, afterwards called Saighir, so that he could live a life of prayer away from the haunts of men. It is told of him that he "began by occupying a cell in the midst of a dense wood," where the wild creatures of the forest gathered round him. Now those who live in solitude and quiet have ever been the ones to tame the wild animals : the timid among the creatures who would be frightened away by noise and rough treatment, overcome their shyness when they are gently handled by some Hermit Saint.

The squirrels, leaping from branch to branch in the trees, would pause to watch Kieran, their bright eyes twinkling, until, after a while, they would take nuts from his hand. And Kieran, who as a child had wept over the bird in the clutches of the hawk, loved the feathered songsters who greeted him each morning with their songs of praise ; while at first, in the solitude of Saighir, his principal attendant was a boar, while for monks he had a fox, a wolf, and a doe.

But after a time folk heard of the Hermit ; his fame spread, and many came to visit him. Then disciples gathered round him, so that Kieran had to build a

## Kieran and the Cuckoo

monastery. Besides having the care of the monks he used to preach the Gospel to the heathen in Ossory, and he is said to have been the founder of that see and the first Bishop there. He also founded a Convent, of which, some say, his mother was the Abbess.

Now, one day a Chief in that neighbourhood came to the Convent, and he carried off one of the nuns. Kieran pursued the Chief until he came to the place where he dwelt and whither he had carried the maiden. At first no heed was taken when the Saint tried to gain admittance to the home of the Chief, but at last a messenger was sent to know what he wanted.

“ I demand that the Nun thy master hath with him shall be returned to the Convent whence he took her,” replied Kieran.

The Chief laughed at this message.

“ Go, tell Father Abbot that unless the Cuckoo rouses me from sleep to-morrow I will not restore the maid.”

And he laughed again, those that were with him laughing also at this answer. For they thought that it was impossible that a cuckoo's voice should be heard in mid-winter.

“ The Cuckoo has flown far from these shores ere now,” said they; “ 'tis not likely it will return at the crying of a maid or the entreaties of that Priest.”

## Kieran and the Cuckoo

But these rude men forgot as they jested that which Kieran, who believed in God, ever remembered, so when the churlish message came that he had best be gone—for unless the Cuckoo should sing the maid would be kept there—he said quietly :

“All things are possible to God. He will send the bird rather than that one hair of that poor maiden’s head be injured.”

And, having gained the Chief’s promise that the Nun should remain alone until the morning, Kieran went through the snow to the house where he was to lodge that night, his head bowed in prayer.

Now, all that night no snow fell, and in the morning a bird perched on a tree growing nigh to the Chief’s window.

“Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo,” sounded through the clear frosty air. It was the note of the Cuckoo as she sings in April and May when first she comes to these isles, and so shrill she sang that not only did the Chief awake at the noise, but his servants also. And they were all astonished at the sight.

Then the Chief called the Abbot.

“Take back the girl,” he said, “for I will have nought to do with her.”

So it was that Kieran returned with the Nun, who



## Kieran and the Cuckoo

was received with much joy by the Abbess of the Convent.

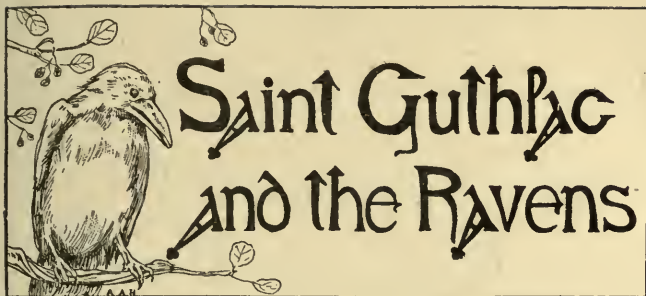
Now, it is thought by some that Kieran crossed the sea to Cornwall, where he ended his days ; and as Irish Saints went great journeys to spread the faith among other peoples, we may rightly think that in Cornwall this " first-born of the Irish Saints had rest."





S. Guthlac





**H**E of whom I write was a hermit, who had his dwelling in desolate mid-England. This bleak fen district was indeed the "dismal swamp," where black streams wandered, oozing in stagnant morasses round the roots of the alder and willow trees. Reed and sedge grew there amidst the floating peat—all that remained of the vast forests of oak, hazel, and yew, which had sunk beneath the sea as year upon year passed by. Trees, torn down by flood and storm, dammed the waters back upon the land. Will-o'-the-wisp lights shone forth by night, warnings which were needless, for no travellers set foot in this land of marsh and mud, where even the sky seemed less blue than in fairer climes.

## S. Guthlac

Yet to this fen came Guthlac, monk of the monastery of Repton, having permission to seek that wilderness for which his soul longed. And he asked of one called Tatwin, who dwelt on the edge of the fenland, whether he knew of any land in that morass which might serve him for a dwelling. Then Tatwin told him that there was, indeed, an island, yet because of its loneliness no man dare live there. "Strange tales," said Tatwin, "are told of this land. Demons torment those who dwell there, making the dreary night a terror with their howlings." "I fear no demons," answered Guthlac, "so show me the way thither." So they rowed through the fens until they came to the island called Crowland or Croyland, known to few but Tatwin. On the Feast of Saint Bartholomew did Guthlac first see the place where he was to dwell all his life.

Now, after he had settled there he was tormented at night by strange noises; fierce-eyed, hairy men, with teeth like horse-tusks, having crooked shanks and deformed feet, came to him. And they tugged and pulled him from his hut, leading him to the fen, where they let him sink in the dark waters, or dragging him through reed and thorn until his body was torn and bleeding, or carrying him on great wings through the cold regions of the air until he fell trembling and shivering, so chill

## And the Ravens

he was. These, then, were the demons of which Tatwin had spoken ; yet some folk hold them to have been naught evil, but simply the cries of the water-wolf, and the moaning of the wind in the alder trees, which were thought to be the shrieks of demons by those whom the marsh fever had laid low. And, maybe, the burning heat and trembling cold of an ague fit caused Guthlac to imagine he was being dragged through brambles or carried through the cold air. But he persevered and dwelt on in that land.

Now, the wild birds of the fens came to him, and he fed them. We are told how the ravens teased him, for they came to steal from the men who sometimes came to Guthlac for the teaching he was ever ready to give to them.

Over the fens came the ravens, with their necks and feet drawn in ; they floated high in the air, steady and self-possessed, then on a sudden off they flew, swooping down upon Guthlac and his friends.

“Cawruk ! cawruk !” they cried, then flew off with some treasure. But Guthlac told them that it was not kind to do this, whereat the ravens listened, sitting upon the alder boughs, and it seemed as if they understood the Saint, for after having communed with each other, they flew down with what they had taken, giving it back

## S. Guthlac

to the Saint. Therefore Guthlac praised the ravens, and the ravens bowed their heads and flapped their wings, making obeisance to him.

Now, one day a holy man named Wilfred came to visit Guthlac. He sat speaking with him on that island in the dismal swamp, when the ravens came, as was their wont, crying "Cawruk!" And Wilfred deemed those cries to bode evil, but Guthlac told him not so. "The raven speaks but after his kind," saith he, "and willeth no ill to any. The good God gave them those hoarse voices and clothed them with sombre feathers. Blessed be His Holy Name who hath given us eyes to see, and wit to perceive the beauty of yonder raven's wings as the sun shines upon them." And another time two swallows came to Guthlac, perching upon his shoulders. They lifted up their voices, singing joyously. Then said Wilfred, for he chanced to be there again :

"I marvel at these birds. Tell me wherefore comes it that the wild birds so tamely sit upon thee?"

To whom Guthlac made reply :

"Hast thou not learned, Brother Wilfred, in Holy Writ, that with him who has led his life after God's will the wild beasts and wild birds are tame?"

Thus dwelt Guthlac in the fens. After his death monks came to the isle whereon he had dwelt, and



S. Guthlac  
AD. 714.



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## S. Guthlac

driving great piles deep into the morass, they built the great Abbey of Croyland—that abbey which became a sanctuary for all who were desolate and oppressed. Wherefore let us give thanks to God who gave Guthlac grace to persevere, and ourselves learn not to be lightly turned from well-doing. For had the Hermit Guthlac forsaken this place where he proposed to lead a holy life, in prayer serving God, because of night fears or marsh fever, the Abbey of Croyland would not have been built.



# The Curlew's Nest





HIS is a tale of Saint Beuno. He was the son of Hywgi ap Gwynllyw Filwr ap Glywys ap Tegid ap Cadell Deyrnllwg, and his mother's name was Perfferen. She was daughter to Llewddyn Luyddog, of Dinas Eiddyn in the North.

And his father's brother was Saint Cattwg of Llancarvan, and his mother was related to Saint Kentigern of Strathclyde; and as he had Saint Gwynllyw Filwr and his wife Gwladys for grandparents, we may see that he came of a family of Saints.

He was a native of Powys, and Tangwn, son of the

## The Curlew's Nest

bard-saint Talhaiarn, taught him when he was a child. Beuno would listen to the songs Tangwn sang—songs made by Talhaiarn, or maybe by Taliessin, that bard of the "Radiant Brow." Perhaps Tangwn told little Beuno the tale of how the magpie tried to teach the woodpigeon to build a tidy nest. This is the tale. Once upon a time there lived a magpie who was sorry to see that the woodpigeon did not know how to build a tidy nest, and he said he would teach his friend. So he began to show how the nest should be made, and the pigeon sat on a tree, looking on. As the lesson proceeded the woodpigeon bowed to the magpie, cooing :

"Mi wn, Mi wn, Mi wn."

*I know, I know, I know.*

The magpie was pleased to think that his friend was so apt a pupil, but then, before he had time to utter another word of instruction, that pigeon bowed again, exclaiming : "I know, I know, I know."

Well, at last the magpie became angry.

"Since you *know*, do it then," he said.

And that is why the woodpigeon's nest is so untidy even to this day, for the pigeon thought he was too clever to need teaching. Thus a saying has arisen which is quoted to those folk who think they know all about

## The Curlew's Nest

subjects of which they are ignorant : " As the Wood-pigeon said to the Magpie, I know ! "

When Beuno was a man, Ynyr Gwent, son-in-law to Vortimer, gave him a piece of land and the people dwelling on it, to form a sacred tribe. Here Beuno lived for some time, but later on he went to Berriew, in Montgomeryshire, where he was again given some land. Now, naturally the Welsh folk hated the Saxons, the conquering tribes who had come to Britain to slay the British people, driving all those they did not kill into the fastnesses of the hills of Wales and Cornwall ; and Beuno hated even the sound of a Saxon voice.

Now, it happened that while he was in Berriew one day he heard a Saxon shouting. The man was urging his dogs to pursue a hare on the farther bank of the Severn. The Saxon words annoyed Beuno ; he thought how the Saxons had hounded down the Welsh folk as this one was seeking to slay the hare, and, being angry, he turned to his disciples, saying :

" My sons, put on your shoes and let us leave this place, for the nation of this man hath a strange language which is abominable, and I heard his voice. They have invaded this land, and will keep it."

So they departed from Berriew, going first to stay with Saint Tyssilio, and afterwards to Gwyddelwern, in

## The Curlew's Nest

Merioneth. Beuno did not stay long at Gwyddelwern, but went to Flintshire. It was while he was there that he healed Winifred, the virtuous daughter of Teuyth, the man with whom he lodged.

It happened on this wise. One day, when Winifred's father and mother were absent, a youth of royal blood who was out hunting grew thirsty, and coming to Teuyth's home asked for water wherewith to quench his thirst.

Winifred was alone, and the youth, perceiving her great beauty, began to speak to her in a manner that was not fitting. The maiden, wishful to escape his insults, ran from him to the little chapel where Beuno was, but the young man pursued her to the chapel door, where he struck her with his sword in anger that she had run from him. He struck deeper than he meant—the red blood flowed from the throat of the girl, who fell to the ground. Hearing an outcry, Beuno hastened from the chapel. There, fallen across the doorway, lay Winifred, the maiden he had taught, while the young man was hastily galloping away, and where the blood trickled to the ground a spring of clear water bubbled up. Under Beuno's loving care Winifred soon recovered, but to this day there is the famous well of Saint Winifred—that holy well in Flintshire, where sick and infirm people may bathe in its healing waters.



## The Curlew's Nest

Saint Beuno moved from place to place until at last he went to Clynnog, and here he ended his days.

Now, while he lived at Clynnog on Sundays he used to go to preach at Llanddwyn, off the coast of Anglesey. He used to walk on the sea to cross from the mainland, as easily, we are told, as if it had been dry land. And with him he carried the book from which he used to preach and read to the people. In those days all books had to be written by hand, and if a copy were lost it would take months, perhaps years, to re-write it. So books were very rare and precious. The Irish Saints used to carry their books in satchels; these satchels they hung from their girdles, so that the books should be in no danger of being lost. Perhaps Beuno did not possess a satchel; anyhow, this Sunday he started to walk on the sea carrying his book under his arm.

Coming back again the waves were higher, so that he found it more difficult to walk than he had on his outward journey. However, he struggled on, and had nearly crossed to Clynnog when he perceived that his book had gone.

Well, there was a sad time then! Poor Saint Beuno knew that the waves would toss the book about, maybe carry it away to Ireland, or even it might be washed ashore and get into the hands of a Saxon. And

## The Curlew's Nest

he was much troubled. However, he felt that as the waves were getting more rough and boisterous all the time he had better make for Clynnog, trusting that when he went to Anglesey again he might find the book had been washed ashore there.

So, much troubled, in heaviness of heart, he made for the land. When he reached it, he saw a curlew sitting on a stone, and, being fond of birds, he spoke to it.

"Brother Curlew, tell *me* if ever thou findest a book in thy flight over the waves," he said jestingly. And the curlew opened his mouth and cried after the manner of curlews.

"Thou could'st carry it well in that long beak of thine," said Beuno, and again the curlew cried. But as the Saint drew nigh to the bird, he saw that on the stone by its side lay the book he had lost.

"Brother Curlew," he exclaimed, "for this service that thou hast rendered me I will ask the Creator's especial protection for thee and thine."

And he fell on his knees in the sand.

Then he took the book with him ; and we may hope that, learning wisdom, he made a satchel to carry it in before he crossed the sea to Llanddwyn again.

But his prayer for the curlew was answered, for that is the reason why it is hard to find the curlew's nest, even to this day.

# Saints Comgall and Isidore





HEAR the tale of one Comgall, an Irishman, how he and his monks were one day walking by the side of a lake. On the lake were some swans; and when the monks saw them, they asked Comgall whether they might try to get the birds to come to them.

Comgall gave them leave, so they felt for some crusts of bread to throw on to the water. But having none, they called to the birds. Yet farther away floated the swans, heeding them not. Then the monks turned to Comgall.

“Father, if thou callest to them, perchance they will come,” said they. Therefore, being asked, Comgall called,

## SS. Comgall and Isidore

and the swans came to him. Nay, one even fluttered to his lap and let him stroke its soft white feathers.

And that is the tale of Comgall and the swans ; but because it is so short a story, hear one now of a Saint who dwelt in another country.

In the twelfth century there lived in Spain a peasant called Isidore. He spent his days ploughing his master's fields, watching his master's crops, having no thought but that of doing his duty faithfully. But the Church, following the example of our Blessed Lord, her Founder, who chose to be born in lowly state, has ever liked to show honour to those simple souls who, having no riches nor possessions, no rank nor title, yet are called to be Saints. So it is that Isidore the peasant was chosen to be patron of a royal city—the capital of Spain. And as each fifteenth of May comes round, in Madrid they hold a festival, keeping the Feast Day of the peasant Saint. Now, Isidore was but a day labourer, going forth to his work until the evening, work which he did well and diligently. Yet slanderous tongues sought to make mischief by saying that Isidore came late to his work, never telling how he worked longer and more diligently than his fellows.

Therefore his master inquired of him wherefore he came not early to work as did his fellow labourers.

## SS. Comgall and Isidore

“ Sir,” said Isidore, “ truly I am at my work later than some of the others ; but I do my best to make up for the few minutes spent in prayer. If my work seemeth unfavourable to thee, or thou thinkest I have defrauded thee in any matter, I pray thee say so, for gladly will I repay thee from my private store.”

Then, knowing that Isidore worked well, that he rose early to go into Madrid to hear Mass, which might make him later at his work, his master said naught. But one day he rose early and went into the fields to watch Isidore. He saw Isidore trudging to church so soon as the dawn appeared, and marked his return. He was later than his fellows, wherefore his master was angry and went to tell him so. Isidore was ploughing, his little son running at the heads of the oxen ; but in the same field, ploughing another furrow, was a second plough. The master stood amazed : this plough was drawn by snow-white oxen, while for ploughman was a radiant angel. Up and down went this heavenly plough, cutting clean furrows. But as the master approached the vision faded from his sight.

“ Isidore,” he called, “ who ploughs the field with thee ? ”

“ No one, sir,” said Isidore, amazed ; “ I work alone, and know of none save God to whom I look for strength.”

## SS. Comgall and Isidore

Therefore the master said no more, but returned home pondering the matter deeply.

Isidore was a kind-hearted man ; he loved the patient oxen who pulled his plough, and the ass who carried the corn to be ground at the mill. Holy beasts, he called them, for was not our Lord born in a stable, the home of the oxen and asses ? and did not an ass bear Him on that Palm Sunday ? And oftentimes looking upon the Cross which the ass has on its back, " Happy beast," he would say, " on whom God has traced the symbol of Redemption, for, because one of thy kind bore thy Saviour, all of thee are blessed."

It is told how one day Isidore and his little son were going to the mill. They had the ass with them, carrying a sack of corn, gleanings from the fields which Isidore's wife had made. It was winter time ; snow covered the ground and sparkled on the tree boughs, and it was difficult for beast and bird to find food. As they went along the birds hovered near, as though they knew that in that sack was a store of food. Presently some pigeons came flying, vainly searching for food.

So Isidore told the boy to stop the ass, and making a hole in the sack he took out some handfuls of wheat for the hungry birds.

" They need it as much as we do," said he ; then he



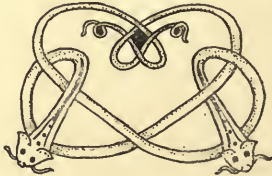


SAINT  
ISIDORE  
A.D. 1130.

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## SS. Comgall and Isidore

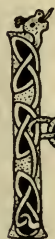
and the boy went on their journey, leaving the feathered folk eating happily. At the age of forty Isidore died : he was buried in the cemetery of Saint André. All who knew him loved him greatly, for he was a true and faithful servant of God, who had laboured earnestly to serve his heavenly Master.



S. Columba



# Saint Columba & the Crane.



HE of whom I write was the first Christian who taught the Catholic Faith to the Pagan tribes of North Britain. On a hillside at a place called Gartan, in Erin or Ireland, he was born, in a wild district of lakes and mountains, the haunt of wolves and other wild beasts.

Columba or Columcille is the name by which we know him, and as one has written of him, "Meet was it that the simple and innocent man, who by his dove-like ways made in himself a dwelling-place for the Holy Spirit, should be called by that name," for "he was angelic of aspect, clean in speech, holy in deed, of excellent disposition, great in counsel." This name, meaning "Dove of the Church," was given to him when a little boy by

## S. Columba

other children because he used to come from the Church to join in their games.

“ Is it from the Church that our little Colum comes to-day ? ” they would say ; for from his childhood Columba loved God, and thus it was that this name clung to him throughout his life.

There are so many beautiful stories about this Saint, that it would take pages were I to tell you half of them.

But when he was about forty years old it chanced that Columba stayed with one Saint Finnian of Moville, who had a very precious copy of the Psalter. Columba loved books, which were rare in those days, as they all had to be written by hand ; therefore he sat up at night copying Saint Finnian’s Psalter. When Finnian knew of this he was angry, and asked King Dermot to take away the copy Saint Columba had made and give it to him.

Then Saint Columba said that he had laboured for the sake of the people, for their instruction it was that he so diligently made copies of the Holy Scriptures. Nevertheless, the King would not grant the copy to Columba. “ To every cow her own calf,” said he, meaning that the copy must go with Saint Finnian’s Psalter.

Then the tribe of Saint Columba—for he was of a princely house—made war against the King, and there was a great battle, wherein many were slain.

S. COLUMBA. AB  
JUNE 9<sup>th</sup> A.D. 597.



## S. Columba

Therefore Saint Columba afterwards, being ashamed that his quarrel had caused the death of so many people, did great penance by leaving his beloved Ireland. To Alba—Scotland—he sailed, to the pagan Northmen, hoping to win as many and more souls to Christ as there had been lives lost in that battle before he would again look upon his native land. He landed at a place called Hii—which was afterwards called Hii-colum-kille, and is now Iona.

Like all good men, Columba held that to love God truly we must needs love His creatures : Columba loved all Nature—the hills, trees, lakes, beasts, and every beautiful thing God has made ; and he wrote about them, for he was one of the greatest poets of those times. But perhaps he loved the birds best, for the birds had wings and could cross “ the salt main on which the sea-gulls cry,” to the coast of Erin, to those beloved shores about which he had written as he sailed from them—

“ From the plank of the oak where in sorrow I lie,  
I am straining my sight through the water and wind,  
And large is the tear from the soft grey eye  
Looking back on the land that it leaves behind.”

It was when he was living in Iona that on a certain day he called one of the brethren of the monastery to him and said :



## And the Crane

“ On the third day from this now dawning, thou must keep a look out in the western part of this isle, sitting on the sea-shore : for from the northern region of Ireland a certain guest, a crane, driven by the wind, will arrive very weary after the ninth hour of the day. And, being exhausted, it will fall and lie before thee on the shore, and thou wilt take care to lift it up kindly and carry it to the Hospice. There thou wilt carefully harbour it and feed it for three days and three nights, when, refreshed, it will stay no longer with us, but return to the sweet country Ireland, whence it came. And I earnestly commend it to thee for that it came from the place of our own fatherland.”

The brother obeyed, and on the third day after the ninth hour he awaited the coming of the expected guest ; and when it came he lifted it from where it fell and, carrying it with him, fed it in its hunger. Then Columba, knowing all things would befall as he had predicted, did not inquire of that brother about the crane, but said :

“ God bless thee, my son, because thou hast well attended our guest. Nevertheless it will not tarry long in exile.” And after three days, raising itself on high, it winged its way back to Ireland, in a straight flight upon a calm day. Now, when Columba was an old man he knew that his departure was at hand. His exile was

## S. Columba

over ; now, indeed, might his soul return to its Fatherland—not to Erin, which was but the fatherland of his body, but to that Fatherland to which Death, the messenger, summons all holy souls.

And he went one day to bless the granary, he and his servant Diormit. When he was there, he gave thanks to God that there was store of food for his monks when he should go from them. Coming from the granary, being weary, he rested upon the roadside, Diormit weeping by him, at the thought that his master was dying. While he sat there resting, the white horse which carried pails of milk from the byre to the monastery came running to the saint. And he put his head against Columba's breast, whinnying and shedding large tears ; for in some wise he knew his master would soon go from him. Diormit would have driven the horse away, but Columba forbade him, saying, " Let him alone, for he loves me. Thou, man as thou art, knew naught of my departure but what I told thee ; but to this brute beast the Creator Himself has clearly in some way revealed that his master is about to go from him."

So saying, he blessed his servant the horse as it sadly turned to go away from him. And that night the soul of the Blessed Columba departed, as he had told Diormit his servant.

# The Robin and the Wren





It has been said that "The robin and the wren are God Almighty's cock and hen." And perhaps it is for this reason that folk love the robin redbreast and the tiny wren. The wren, indeed, although it is so small, has been called the King Bird. There are two tales this time—tales of holy men who loved these little birds; and the first tale may be called *Robin Redbreast's Corn*. It is told how a monk sailed to Brittany. He came across the sea from Britain with some disciples, brother monks who wanted to form a monastery, with him as their head. Not much is known about Leonore, for that was his name, before he crossed the waters which divide Great Britain from that little

## The Robin and the Wren

Britain. It is thought that he may have learned from Saint Illut of Wales, and been ordained priest by Saint Dubricius.

But we know that he went to Brittany, and that there he wanted to build a church, where he and his Brethren might worship God. They thought, too, that they might teach the people of Christ, for in those days there were many who yet worshipped false gods.

Therefore Leonore and the Brothers built a little chapel ; simple and rude it might be, but it was all they could do. Here they hung a bell, and the solemn tolling was heard across the moorland, and perchance made those heathen wonder who the God could be whom these men worshipped daily.

The Brothers then put their dwelling in order ; they cut the heather and turf ready for fuel for the cold winter months ; they brought stone to build walls. Where the land was swampy they drained it. Many things they did to make their habitation comfortable. One of them, skilled in working, fashioned a plough ; with this the Brethren managed to plough some of the land. Then came sowing-time, but they had no wheat.

“ Where,” said one of the Brethren, “ can grain be found ? The land, indeed, is ready, ploughed with much

## The Robin and the Wren

labour, but what avails it if there be no seed? Truly our labour is in vain." For in that wild place the people knew naught about corn.

"God will help us," said Leonore; "the ground is ready. He will send the grain."

Now, while he spake flying through the air came a robin. This robin alighted upon the cross which the monks had raised by the wayside, and Leonore, raising his eyes, perceived that the bird carried in his beak a wheat-ear full of golden grain.

Then he called to the robin, whereat the bird fluttered to him, allowing the wheat-ear to be taken from him.

"If this be sown," said Leonore, "at harvest time we shall have many more wheat-ears."

And he straightway fell on to his knees, praising God for His goodness, as did they all, while the little robin sang merrily, praising Him too.

Then the wheat was planted, and in due time yielded increase, so that in years to come the land was golden with waving corn.

And the Brothers preached and taught, so that in after days many churches were built among the wheat-fields, many bells rang

"At morn  
With a thought of God  
O'er the golden corn."

## The Robin and the Wren

Now, by this tale we may learn that small beginnings are not to be despised. There is an old proverb—

“Get thy spindle and distaff ready,  
And God will send the Flax.”

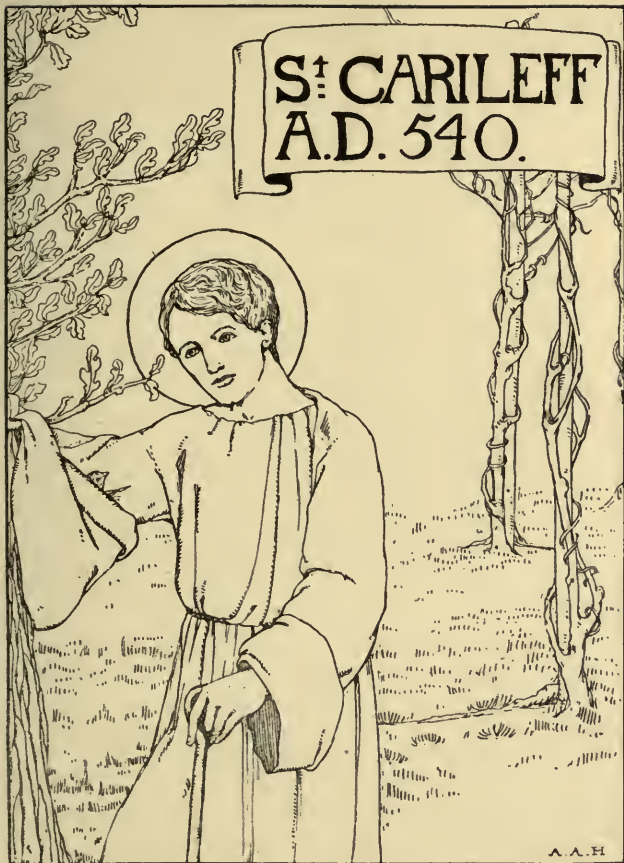
And this saying and robin redbreast's corn teach us the same lesson—never to wait to begin work for God, because the beginning may seem small. Rather set to work, trusting to God that He will prosper and continue it to His glory, although it may be by other hands and in other days than ours. “Let a man do his work; the fruit of it is the care of Another than he.”

Now about the little wren. In France, in the sixth century, lived one Saint Carileff. He dwelt in a monastery; but the fame of this monastery having spread through the country, many pilgrims resorted thither. Therefore Carileff and a companion departed thence to seek a quieter spot. They wandered on until they came upon the ruins of a Roman villa, and here they abode. Now, nigh unto the ruins grew a vineyard, but it had long been neglected, long had the vines run wild. Carileff set to work to remedy this, pruning the vines and tying them up.

One spring day, as he worked among them, the sun shone so brightly that he took off his hood, hanging it



S<sup>t</sup>: CARILEFF  
A.D. 540.



A. A. H.

## The Robin and the Wren

upon an oak-tree, that he might be cooler whilst he laboured.

At the end of the day, when the sun was sinking, he went to get his hood again. But a tiny face peeped out from between the folds ; two bright eyes timidly gazed at him. It was a little wren, who thought she had found a soft nest wherein to lay her eggs and rear her babies.

When she saw Carileff she withdrew farther into the hood, for it is ever the nature of a wren to hide rather than to fly from danger. But Carileff spoke to her, whistling to her in tones as sweet as her own. And he left the hood hanging there ; while ere long six nestlings appeared, and the wren would allow the Saint to stroke them.

One day Carileff returned to the monastery whence he came, to tell the Abbot the tale of Jenny Wren. The Abbot said :

“ That is no accident, my son. Return thither, for a great monastery will arise some day where the little wren nested in thy hood.” So Carileff returned and abode there.

Other animals loved Carileff. It is told how a noble buffalo from the forest would come and allow him to pat it and rub its shaggy neck. Each day the buffalo

## The Robin and the Wren

came to be stroked between its horns or on its strong neck ; then it would gallop back to the forest.

But one day King Childebert hunted in the wood, and hearing that a buffalo, already rare in the forests of Gaul, had been seen, he wished to kill it. Therefore the dogs were loosed, and the chase began. On and on fled the buffalo until he came to his friend Carileff ; there he stayed, feeling that he was safe with the holy man. Then the king and the huntsmen appeared ; the king was angry to see the buffalo standing there, Carileff kneeling in prayer by its side, and he would have slain the beast.

But Carileff spoke gently to the king, so that after a while he promised to let the buffalo go unhurt. Not only that, but his heart was so won by the saint's courage and piety that he furthermore promised to him as much land as he could in a day ride round on an ass. On the land so obtained was built the abbey, round which has sprung up the city of Calais. So here is another tale of a small beginning, showing that even the smallest of God's creatures may reveal His Will to those who will understand it.



S. Keneth





**Y**OU have heard many tales of the kindness of Saints to birds, now you shall be told about some birds being kind to a Saint. These birds were the seagulls, those gulls which are to be seen flying round the coast crying, "hyuk-kak-kah," or hovering over the newly made furrows, as they follow the plough, seeking for worms in the fresh brown soil.

Now, these seagulls were resting on the rocks of Gower, in Glamorganshire, for they had been inland for a long fly, trying to find suitable places on marshy moors where they might build their nests when the spring came. And as they rested, many of them standing on one leg,

## S. Kenneth

others preening their feathers, one of them perceived something on the sea sailing towards them.

It was small, and it was tossed gently up and down by the waves. Then the gulls thought that they would go closer to it, thinking, perchance, it might contain something good for food. So they flew off, circling round and round, until they hovered over what they had come to see.

What they saw was a coracle, a little wicker boat covered with hide, and inside it lay a baby. He was fast asleep, for the waves had rocked the tiny boat, lulling him to rest as peacefully as a babe in its cradle, watched over by its mother. And the sea sang slumber songs to him, murmuring softly.

When the gulls saw him they wondered, for they had never before seen so small a craft containing so small a sailor. Men they knew, both on land and on sea; babies they had seen when they flew inland, but never alone as was this one. Now, this poor little one had been cast out because his parents had sinned, and set adrift in the osier coracle to float where the wind and the waves carried him. Therefore the gulls, being tender-hearted birds, took counsel together. "He is so small," said they, "he cannot hurt us; and by next spring, when we nest, perchance he will be grown and will have left us."



## Of the Gulls

So they fluttered down, taking hold of the coracle with their beaks that so they might guide it to shore. When they reached the beach and the boat lay still on the sand, little Keneth awoke. He wanted more rocking ; he wanted some one to gently pat him ; most of all he wanted his mother ; so he began to cry.

This puzzled the gulls : it was so different from their own cry of "hyuk-kak-kah." Some of them, indeed, flew away, afraid. But the wise ones saw that all the baby seemed able to do was to open his mouth wide, and wrinkle his little face—he could not even stand, neither could he hurt them with his tiny fists. So they thought they would carry him to their ledge of rock ; they raised him from the coracle, bearing him up with their claws and beaks ; and thus they were able to put him on the rock. And Keneth wept no longer, for the gulls built him a soft nest from their breast feathers, and being warm, he slept again. Then those sea-birds gathered round him ; they were proud of their new nestling.

"He must be fed," said they, wondering what they should give him. While they wondered, a very old gull, who had not been out to sea with them because her wings were getting feeble and she had needed rest after her long inland flight, came to know what they had

## S. Keneth

found. She was looking at the baby, when she heard them talk of food for him. Then she told how, when nigh to the haunts of men, she had learned that human babes were fed on milk. And she said that, perhaps, the Forest Doe which sometimes came to nibble the short grass on the top of the cliffs, would help them. So the gulls made another nest for Keneth, where the Doe came, and here he lived. He was both healthy and happy, living there with those gulls, nestling against their soft feathers when he was cold, while when the wind blew they sheltered him with their wings. The Doe, too, often came to see him, and he thrived and grew big, cared for by his animal foster-mother.

Now, one day a shepherd was walking along the cliff, seeking for one of his sheep ; and as he walked he perceived Keneth, and wondered how so small a babe could live on those rocks. Marvelling greatly, he picked up the little one, and carried him home to his wife, saying, " Here is a lamb for thee to cherish."

And the wife was pleased, for her own cradle stood empty, and she longed for a babe to fill her empty arms and bring comfort to her sorrowing heart. So she laid little Keneth in the cradle of the baby who had died.

But the gulls were sorrowful when they saw the shepherd take Keneth, and followed after him. When



SAINT KENETH  
6<sup>th</sup> CENTURY.

A.A.H.

## S. Keneth

they saw the cradle and Keneth lying in it, they swooped down upon it, and taking hold of it were able to carry it away. Back to the cliffs they took Keneth; but whether he lived there with them until he was grown a big boy I do not know. Rather, I think, did that shepherd's wife come to seek him, and one day—perchance when the seagulls had gone to that marsh where they built their nests—Keneth toddled home with her to learn those things which boys must know. But we hear of him again as the Hermit of Gower. Years afterwards he returned to the cliffs where the seagulls lived. Here in his old age, after many years of well-doing, loved and revered by all who knew him, he ended his days, passing his remaining years in the company of the friends of his babyhood—the sea-birds and the forest deer.



S. Francis





VER seven hundred years ago was Francis born in Assisi, the quaint Umbrian town among the rocks. His father's name was Bernardone, and his mother was called Pica. It was while his father, who was a cloth merchant, was selling his goods in France that the little baby came, and when Bernardone reached home he bade them call the boy Francesco, the Frenchman.

Now, as the little Francis grew he showed that he was loving and merry and gay; this joy, indeed, lasted throughout his life.

But for a time his high spirits led him to make friends with youths who were careless and even bad. Francis

## S. Francis

himself did not fall into sin, and as he grew older he cared not for all the foolish gaiety and mad pranks of his friends, but began to think more of serious things.

And so he gave up all that the world holds dear, filled with the one hope that he, a weak, erring man, might so be enabled by the grace of God as to lead the same holy, beautiful, and sorrowful life that our Blessed Lord lived upon earth—" as poor, yet making many rich ; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

To resemble our Blessed Lord in His humanity was the burning desire of Francis' heart, as it should be the desire of all who are " called to be Saints." It was one day in the Church of Saint Mary of the Angels that the message came to him : " Provide neither gold nor silver nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves," so read the Gospeller from the Holy Gospel ; therefore Francis cast away his shoes from off his feet and went barefoot, clad in a coarse brown habit, girded by a rough cord. To this day the brethren of the Order of Brothers Minor which he founded are habited thus, and they are known as " Franciscans," or the Friars of Saint Francis.

Now, of all the Saints whose stories you have heard Francis is perhaps the one who best loved the birds and



## S. Francis

beasts and flowers. He was so gracious and loving to all things, that it is not to be wondered that he loved God's creatures, and that in a time when most men were given over to bloodshed and plunder, caring naught for the weak things of the earth.

The tender flowers Francis loved, and he used to say to the brother gardener that he ought always to make a fair pleasaunce in some part of the garden, there to plant sweet-smelling herbs and fair flowers, that whoso looked upon them might glorify God.

One day he saw a lamb feeding among a herd of goats, and this little white lamb put him in mind of our Lord among the Pharisees. Therefore Francis would fain have bought that innocent creature, only naught had he to offer for it but his brown habit. Then a merchant came and, buying the lamb, he gave it to the Saint, who took it with him and preached to the people of the Lamb of God, the while they looked upon the little lamb in his arms.

Afterwards he left it to the care of some holy women, and when it waxed strong they sheared it, making Francis a gown from its wool. Then there were the sister-bees, as he called them; for these he set honey and wine in the winter; the brother-ass on which he rode; the leveret which was brought to him alive one

## S. Francis

day by a friend who wished to give the Saint some food. But when Francis saw the baby hare, his heart was filled with pity.

“ Little brother leveret, come to me,” he said, “ why didst thou suffer thyself to be taken ? ”

And the leveret, escaping from the hands of him who held it, ran to the Saint, hiding in the folds of his gown. Then Francis bade it begone, so little brother leveret went back to his home unhurt.

Another day, when he was teaching the people in a town called Savurniano, a company of swallows building their nests filled the air with their joyous twittering, insomuch that Francis could not be heard ; so he spake to them.

“ Little sisters,” he said, “ it is now time that I should speak. As you have had your turn, listen now to the word of God,” and the swallows, obeying him, were silent.

Now, as he came away from that town he saw by the roadside trees growing, and on the branches of the trees a great company of birds, well-nigh without number ; then Francis said to the Brethren that were with him :

“ Wait for me by the wayside, and I will go and preach unto my little sisters the birds.”



Francis.  
The Little Poor  
Man of Assisi.

A. A. H.

## S. Francis

And he went to the trees and began to preach to the birds ; then those birds which were on the branches flew to the ground the better to hear him, and there they stayed until he made an end of preaching, staying still and quiet until he gave them his blessing. This is what he said to them :

“ My little sisters the birds, much beholden are ye to God your Creator ; in every place ought ye to praise Him always, for He hath given you liberty to fly whither ye will. Raiment also hath He given you, double and threefold. Moreover, in the ark of Noah He preserved your kind, so that ye still might inhabit the earth. Still more are you bounden to Him for the air, which He hath given you as your portion. Beyond all this ye sow not, neither reap, but God feeds you and gives you streams and fountains for your drink ; the mountains and valleys He gives you for your refuge, the tall trees whereon to make your nests. God clotheth you, you and your children, because ye know not how to spin. Wherefore must not your Creator love you greatly, seeing He hath bestowed so many benefits upon you ? Therefore beware of the sin of ingratitude, my little sisters, and take heed always to give God praise.” Then, as the Saint ceased speaking, those birds began to open their beaks and stretch their necks and spread out their

## S. Francis

wings, showing by their joy and the songs they sang that what Francis had spoken pleased them well. And Francis rejoiced with them and was glad, praising God for the sweet friendliness of the birds; then, after he had made the sign of the Cross over them, the birds arose with much singing, and dividing into four companies they flew east, west, north, and south, singing wondrous songs.

And this manner of their flight signified, we are told, that even as Saint Francis, the standard-bearer of the Cross of Christ, had preached to the birds, making over them the sacred sign, so should he and the Brothers preach the Cross throughout the world—the Brothers, as the birds, having naught of their own in this world, but committing their lives wholly unto God's providence; the Brothers also, as the birds, going east, west, north, and south in great joy.

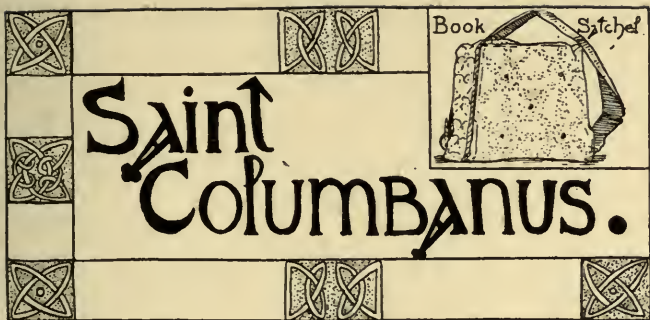




**S. Columbanus**







**Y**OU have heard of Saint Kentigern, who preached the faith to the people of Strathclyde, or Cumbria; of Saint Cuthbert, who laboured for Northumbrian folk; of Guthlac, who lived in the fens and in whose honour Croyland Abbey was built; of Columba, who left Ireland, going to Scotland to win souls for Christ. Hear now of another saint, an Irishman, as was Columba, bearing the same name too, for he also was called Columbanus, or Columban, which in Latin is *Columba*, a dove.

But this Columba was born twenty-two years after

## S. Columbanus

Columcille—the Dove of the Church—and though they bore the same name, held the same Faith, and preached the same Gospel, one of them took the glad tidings to North Britain, the other journeyed over sea and land to France and Italy. Ireland has been called the Isle of Saints, because of the number of holy men and women who lived there, and these men remembered our Lord's command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation"; so that all over Europe we find the monasteries that they built, the churches and bishoprics that they founded. From Iceland in the north, through England, France, Switzerland, Austria, and Germany, to Italy in the south, there are many places which might not have known the Faith had not God put it into the hearts of these men from that small green island in the Atlantic Ocean to go forth in His name, preaching the Gospel.

Saint Columban's home was in the west of Leinster, and he was taught at a small school on the island of Cleenish, in Lough Erne, by a Saint who was a disciple of Saint Finnian of Clonard. From Cleenish he went to study at Beannchoir (Bangor), in County Down. Saint Comgall, of whom you have heard in the tale of the swans, was the head and founder of Bangor. Here Columban lived for a while, studying under Comgall.

## S. Columbanus

But often he thought that a voice called to him, and he could not forget its message, "Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee."

Thus Columban, as Abraham of old, thought the Voice spake to him, and a desire came upon him to obey the command.

But at first Comgall begged him not to go. Why not stay in Ireland and teach there? But in Columban's ears the message rang clear, "Get thee out of thy country."

Then Columban's will prevailed against Comgall's, and sorrowfully the Abbot bade him good-bye, bidding him go forth in Christ's name.

So Columban sailed from Ireland with twelve monks, whom Saint Comgall had given to him for companions in his journeying, Columban being at this time about thirty years old. To Scotland first they went, where perchance Columban saw his great namesake, and from England they sailed to Gaul, which in those days was the name for France.

Now, Gaul at this time was in a very troublous state : three brothers were Kings there, each ruling over a different part and oftentimes quarrelling. The people of Gaul were not altogether heathen ; they knew of Christ,

## S. Columbanus

but heeded not His precepts, neither obeyed His laws, and Columban wished to turn their hearts from evil and bring them into the paths of godliness.

But for a while the saint could not teach the people, for he did not speak the same language ; neither could the Gauls understand Irish nor yet Latin, which was the speech of the Church. Yet they watched the monks, wondering who they could be and whence they came, these men clad in coarse woollen habits, worn over white tunics, with staves in their hands and leathern water-bottles, relic-cases, writing-tablets, and wallets hanging from their girdles or strapped to their shoulders.

At last Columban could both understand and speak to the people, so when they asked, " Whence comest thou ? " he answered, " I am an Irish pilgrim, and my speech and actions are like my name, which in Latin is *Columba*—a dove."

And it was because he was so gentle and dove-like that those wild Gauls allowed him and his fellows to dwell there.

Now, Columban was sad to see the wicked ways of the three Kings, and he rebuked them. One of them listened to his words, at length telling the Saint that he would give him whatever he should ask if he would

Saint Columban.  
A.D. 615



## S. Columbanus

but stay in Gaul and help him to rule his part of the kingdom.

But Columban told him that they wished not for earthly comforts. "We are followers of Jesus Christ, who saith, 'Whosoever will be My disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.'"

When the King heard that, he still entreated the monks to remain, so they settled at a place called Annegray, on the borders of Alsace and Burgundy. Here they built their monastery; here they lived on the wild fruit and herbs, often hungry for want of food.

Like most Saints, Columban loved animals, and it is told of him how the wild forest beasts would come to him and obeyed his voice. One day many wolves came to him with intent to kill him, but when Columban spake to them they harmed him not, but went back into the forest. It was a wolf who lived high among the rocks whither Columban used to go to pray who gave up her den for an oratory for him, never hurting him when he rested and prayed there. The birds loved him, fluttering down from the trees to perch on his shoulders; the timid, bright-eyed squirrels ran to him, playing at hide-and-seek in his cowl. Here he and the brethren dwelt for some years; here he gave them their

## S. Columbanus

rule, bidding them wear white garments in token of the purity in which their lives should be spent. Two other monasteries he founded in Gaul—Fontaines and Luxeuil—ere he was called to labour in other lands. It is too long a tale to tell how or why he left Annegray, or of the trouble he went through ere on his journey to Italy he parted with one of the brethren, Saint Gall, who stayed in Switzerland, Columban going on to Milan. In Italy he laboured until his working time was over. At a place called Bobio his pilgrim feet had rest ere death came for him. Here the copy of the Gospels which he had carried in his wallet from Ireland remained, among other precious books, for the library at Bobio was one of the greatest there was.

Even after all these years some of the books remain carefully treasured at Milan, at Turin, and at Rome. And in one of the books which was taken to Bobio from Ireland in the ninth century, and is now at Milan, was found the hymn "Sancti Venite Christi corpus sumete."\*

And the legend is that this Irish hymn was first heard by the great Saint Patrick as he drew nigh to a church wherein the Holy Sacrifice was being offered, but those who sang it were the angels.

\* Hymn 313, A. and M.

## St. Columbanus

We often sing this hymn, for a good man called Dr. Neale put it into English for us. Therefore when we sing—

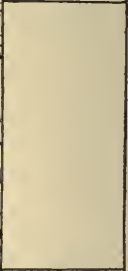
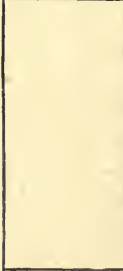
“Draw nigh and take the Body of the Lord,  
And drink the holy Blood for you outpoured,”

let us remember to thank Him, who “ His Saints in this world rules and shields,” for the lives of the men He called from Ireland to be labourers in His vineyard.





S. Hugh





# Saint Hugh & his Swan.

**H**UGH, Bishop of Lincoln, who lived in the twelfth century, was not an Englishman by birth. His father was a knight of Burgundy, and Hugh lost his mother when he was very young. At eight years old he was sent to a Convent of Regular Canons, near to his home, to be brought up a monk.

Every happy game was denied to the little eight-year-old boy: he must neither run, laugh, or joke as did other children.

“Hugh, I bring you up for Christ,” said his master, the monk who taught him. “No jokes for you.”

## S. Hugh

Now, this treatment would have broken the spirit of many boys, but Hugh bent under the vigorous discipline, becoming obedient, loving, and guileless.

When he was nineteen he was taken one day to the Grande Chartreuse monastery, near Grenoble. He looked at the pine-clad Alps with their snowy summits, and the loveliness and grandeur of the scene impressed him. He loved the sombre pine woods and the dazzling snow, and would fain have become a monk at Chartreuse. His companions thought the life of a Carthusian Monk would be too hard for him.

“I have lived simply from my childhood,” said Hugh.

Yet he went back to the Convent for a while ; but the rich plains of his native Burgundy did not draw him as did the rugged mountains round the Grande Chartreuse, so after a while he went there and asked to be admitted as a Carthusian Monk.

Ten happy years were spent there ; then the call came. He was to leave those snow-clad summits, thundering avalanches, the blue gentians and Alpine roses, for a Somerset valley ; to leave that again for the desolate fens of Lincolnshire, where instead of crisp air and glittering mountains he would have the raw fogs and damp marshes of an English fen.

## And his Swan

At Witham, in Somersetshire, Henry II, King of England, had founded the first Carthusian Abbey on English soil. As it had not prospered under the first two Priors, the Bishop of Bath was sent to the Grande Chartreuse to ask for a Monk who was thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the Carthusian Order to come to Witham to build the foundations of a thriving Community. Hugh was chosen to go. Hugh, who loved the Grande Chartreuse and its solitude so greatly; but better than the mountains, better than the monastery Hugh loved his Saviour, so when he was convinced that duty called him to England on his Master's service, he bid farewell to the life he loved so well and set forth on his journey.

When he was established at Witham he saw that much reform was needed to make the English Community like the Grande Chartreuse. Now even the English folk in the twelfth century were suspicious of anything that was new—the people who lived round Witham did not like the idea of a new Community of Religious in England.

“ Let the Carthusian Monks stay in their own land,” they thought; and Hugh's heart may have echoed that wish as he toiled under the dull sky, and the heavy rains of an English autumn. He saw that the actual

## S. Hugh

building needed to be bettered and enlarged, so he set to work, carrying the stones and kneading the mortar himself. And the folk round Witham took note of this ; they also saw that the Carthusian rule which they thought too severe for any man did not tend to make Hugh gloomy, sombre, or severe. Instead this man, strict as was his own life, had ever a tender word and a gentle smile for others ; and when he spoke to them in his broken English, his sweet face expressed all that his halting tongue could not utter. So prejudice wore away, and the house at Witham became a busy hive where industry, devotion, and harmony reigned supreme.

Now it so happened that for two years the see of Lincoln had been vacant, and during those years Henry II had taken the money belonging to it ; but after a while he felt that it would not do to leave it longer without a Bishop, and he therefore told the Chapter to consider whether Hugh, Prior of Witham, might not well become Bishop of Lincoln ; for Henry had a great respect for Hugh. So the Chapter dutifully elected the Prior. Hugh, however, did not like this. " You have chosen me at the bidding of the King," he said. " And I will not come to Lincoln, for perhaps in your hearts you know of one you would rather have

## And his Swan

than I. Choose for your Bishop one whom you judge most worthy to Shepherd the flock of Christ, and not at the bidding of an earthly king."

But the Chapter again elected Hugh, this time convincing him that it was by their own wish, and not simply to gain favour with the King, that they asked him to be their Bishop.

At Lincoln, as at Witham, Hugh found much to be done. He saw that the Foresters who were overseers of the Royal Chases often oppressed the poor, treating them with great cruelty. He excommunicated the Chief Forester. Henry was angry at this; that a Bishop who owed his preferment to the King should dare to excommunicate a Royal Forester, was unheard-of impudence, and he remonstrated with Hugh.

But Hugh was firm, explaining that though Henry had temporal power over the Foresters—to appoint or dismiss them, *he* had the spiritual authority over their souls, and the King was forced to submit. Again, later on, Henry urged the Bishop to give a Prebendal stall to one of his Courtiers. But Hugh said: "The King has the means of rewarding his servants without burdening the Church with them; a prebend's stall is for a Clerk, not a Courtier."

Now Hugh loved animals and birds. He had a

## S. Hugh

Swan which lived in the moat, and when he walked near to the moat the swan would come to him and put its head up the Bishop's sleeve, so that he might caress it. It fed from Hugh's hand, and would swim along in the water while the Bishop walked on the pathway by the moat.

It used to go off into the Fens, sometimes, but it always returned to Hugh. Indeed, once or twice, the return of the Swan was at the same time as the return of the Bishop from a Lenten Retreat, so that folks used to say that the coming of the Swan was a sure sign of the coming of the Bishop.

Hugh lived on at Lincoln when Richard Cœur de Lion was King, until John reigned. King John sent him to France to conclude a treaty of peace between that country and England; and Hugh went once more to see his beloved mountains and pine forests round the Grande Chartreuse.

He did not reach Lincoln alive. On his way through London he fell ill of a fever and there died, peacefully and fearlessly as he had lived.

His body they took to Lincoln for burial.

Thus died Hugh, Monk of the Grande Chartreuse; Bishop of Lincoln; by some called "Hammer-King," because of his fearless dealings with Kings.



## And his Swan

And Richard, himself "Lion-Hearted," is reported to have said of him, "If all the Bishops in my realm were like that man, Kings and Princes would be powerless against them."





# A Christmas Tale





# Christmas Tale.

**H**ITHERTO there has been a legend of a Saint for each month, sometimes more than one, but for bleak December, when the birds sit huddled together on the bare tree branches, and the ground is frozen hard, there is no other Saint of whom to tell you—no Saint, that is, of whom any kindness done to beast or bird is recorded, and whose day is in December. But this is the month of the Nativity; in it our Blessed Lord came from heaven to be born as a little helpless baby in the stable at Bethlehem, so that all folk might know and love Him and be redeemed from their sins. Therefore, as December is our Blessed Lord's birthday month, hear more tales of one who was His true disciple, Francis of Assisi.

## A Christmas Tale

Now, Francis was always mindful of the pattern life of our Lord, always loving to His creatures, so it was small wonder that on Christ's birthday the Saint should wish that people should be kind to each other and to the beasts and birds, for he had more reverence for Christmas than for any other festival, and this is what he said :

“ I would,” said he, “ that all governors of the towns and the lords of castles and villages should be bound every year on Christmas Day to compel men to throw wheat and other grain, so that our sister larks and the other birds might have food on so solemn a day. And for the reverence of the Son of God, Who rested on that night between the ox and the ass in the manger, whoever shall have oxen and asses should on that night give them good fodder. Also on Christmas Day the rich men should give food to their poorer neighbours.” And it was a great delight to Francis to make in the churches of the Order a representation of the manger at Bethlehem, on the Feast of the Nativity. For himself loving our Blessed Lord so greatly, the Saint fain would have led all folk to do likewise, and he judged that the sight of however lowly a presentation of the Christ-child in His crib might win more hearts than much preaching.

So one year, on the Eve of the Feast, this was done in the hermitage of Greccio. The peasants wended

## A Christmas Tale

their way to Greccio, singing carols as they went through the forest, for Francis loved to hear the melodies of both birds and men, being himself ever the most joyous of God's servants. Then, when they had come to the church, they found a stable with an ox and an ass tied to the manger, and Saint Francis spake to them about that inn at Bethlehem and of the Christ-child and His sweet Mother, so that the hearts of all who heard him were touched, and the tears ran down the faces of the men and women. Even the little children wept tears of joy and thankfulness.

Now, as a knight called Giovanni, who had given the ox and the ass and stable, watched Francis kneeling by the empty manger, a wonderful thing happened. For it seemed to him that he saw in the manger a most fair Child lying. And the Child, waking from slumber and perceiving the Saint bending over the manger, his face aflame with joy, stretched forth Its little hands to him.

To this day in England and other lands, if you were to go into some churches on Christmas Eve, you might see an image of the stable at Bethlehem, as in those days long ago when Francis, the little Bedesman of Christ, thought that to see the lowly manger might save folk from falling into the grievous heresy of denying that the Son of God was born of a virgin for our salvation.

## A Christmas Tale

It was at Alvernia, that rock which towers above the valley of the Arno, that Saint Francis received such token from his Lord as to be made perfect in outward likeness to his Saviour—in so far as a frail man may resemble Him who is both God and man, and it happened in this wise :

Francis, with three of his brethren that were most dear to him, went up to Alvernia to keep the forty days' Fast of Saint Michael and All Angels, for this lonely rock had been given to him for a hermitage. Now, as Francis rested under an oak, for the way was steep and stony, the birds flew down to him, fluttering on to his head and his shoulders, even into his lap and about his feet.

“ Not ill-pleased is our Lord that we have come to dwell here, I think,” said Francis, “ seeing with what glee our little sisters the birds greet us.”

Then he arose and wended his way up the mountain-track, the birds circling round him in much joy.

And the brethren built him a cell at Alvernia, where he might dwell alone in prayer, for it had been shown to Francis that soon he would die. A while later the Saint abode in a yet more lonely spot, communing with his Saviour, his only companion a falcon.

Here it was on the day of Holy Cross that the trans-



And the Child stretched  
forth His little hands.



## A Christmas Tale

figuration befell him, for early in the morning, kneeling with his face turned towards the Sacred East, Francis besought the Lord Jesus to grant him two graces before he died. And the one grace was that he might feel in his body the torture which his Lord had borne for him in His Passion ; the other was that he might feel in his heart the exceeding love for which Christ was willing to bear such torture. Even so was it granted to Francis ; for in his hands and feet were imprinted the marks of the cruel nails, in his side was the gash of the spear-thrust. But of the agony and rapture of those wounds no tongue can tell.

And thus was the little poor man of Christ transfigured into the visible semblance of Him he loved so well, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

A Table of the Saints  
with their Days and Months



Notes on the  
Emblems and Shrines of the Saints



## A Table of the Saints with their Days and Months

<i>January—</i>		
13th	S. Kentigern	6th and 7th century.
<i>February—</i>		
4th	S. Aventine	6th century.
23rd	S. Milburgh	7th century.
27th	S. Baldomer	7th century.
<i>March—</i>		
5th	S. Kieran	6th century.
11th	S. Angus of Keld	9th century.
20th	S. Cuthbert	7th century.
<i>April—</i>		
11th	S. Guthlac	8th century.
21st	S. Beuno	6th to 7th century.
<i>May—</i>		
10th	S. Comgall	6th century.
10th	S. Isidore	12th century.
<i>June—</i>		
9th	S. Columba	6th century.

## A Table of the Saints

### *July—*

1st	S. Carileff	6th century.
1st	S. Leonore	6th century.

### *August—*

1st	S. Keneth	6th century.
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### *October—*

4th	S. Francis	13th century.
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### *November—*

17th	S. Hugh	12th century.
21st	S. Columbanus	6th century.

## Notes

### ON THE EMBLEMS OF THE SAINTS

When Saints were painted in pictures, carved in stone, or portrayed in stained glass, people found it necessary to put certain signs which would distinguish one Saint from another.

In representing two bishops, for instance, it would be difficult to paint them in such a way that those who looked at them might at once say, "This is Saint Cuthbert," or "That is Saint Kentigern." So it is that for nearly every Saint there has come to be some special sign or symbol by which we may know one from another ; these symbols are usually taken from something that happened to the Saint or took place in his life, and they are known as Emblems.

Kentigern, for example, among other emblems has a robin, because of the tale of the redbreast which he restored to life.

And here is a list of the emblems by which, if you chance to see them in the coloured windows or the beautiful

## Emblems of the Saints

carving of some church or cathedral, you will be able to know that they belong to the Saints whose tales are told in this book.

- \**S. Kentigern.* A robin, a tree, salmon with ring in its gills, a bell.
- \**S. Aventine.* Taking a splinter from a bear's paw.
- \**S. Milburgh.* Flock of wild swans.
- S. Baldomer.* Birds perching on his fingers.
- S. Kieran.* The cuckoo. A blackberry briar.
- S. Angus of Keld.* A book.
- \**S. Cuthbert.* Swans and otters.
- S. Guthlac.* Ravens.
- S. Beuno.* A curlew. Healing S. Winifred.
- S. Comgall.* A swan with its head in Comgall's lap.
- S. Isidore.* Angel ploughing.
- \**S. Columba.* In a coracle. A white horse.
- S. Carileff.* Wren nesting in cowl. Buffalo.
- S. Leonore.* Robin with wheat ear.
- S. Keneth.* Seagulls. A doe.
- \**S. Francis.* A crown of thorns. The Stigmata.  
Preaching to birds.
- \**S. Hugh.* A swan and a well.
- \**S. Columbanus.* In a bear's den. Foliated crucifix.
- The emblems to Saints marked \* are of ancient origin.



# Shrines of the Saints

## ON THE SHRINES OF THE SAINTS

By a *Shrine* we mean a place or receptacle where some precious object is preserved. In Christian countries the name is given to the tomb or coffer containing the relics of a Saint. Sometimes the Shrines covered the entire body of a Saint, sometimes but a portion of a body, because oftentimes Saints were also martyrs—they gave their lives for their Faith, and their murderers mutilated their bodies.

These are the Saints mentioned in this book who have had Shrines :

- (1) Saint Kentigern.
- (2) Saint Kieran.
- (3) Saint Cuthbert.
- (4) Saint Guthlac.
- (5) Saint Columba.
- (6) Saint Hugh.
- (7) Saint Columbanus.

(1) In Glasgow Cathedral there is an effigy called the *Shrine of Saint Kentigern* in the crypt, but it is doubtful whether it is really connected with this Saint.

(2) On the north coast of Cornwall *Saint Kieran* is said to have built an oratory. He died about the year 480, and was buried beneath the Altar stone in that little Church.

## Notes

But the sand from the seashore drifted and covered the oratory, so that in the tenth century another Church had to be built. To this new Church the head of Saint Kieran was taken and enshrined there. At the Reformation the head was taken back and placed beneath the Altar in the little sand-covered oratory again. Here the relics remained until 1835, when once more the Shrine was exposed to view ; and, to our shame be it spoken, the sacred relics were afterwards lost, and the oratory nearly destroyed.

In Cornwall Kieran is known as Saint Piran, the Cornish people having changed the first letter of his name to P.

(3) *Cuthbert*, you will remember, was laid to rest wrapped in the linen cloth which Verca, Abbess of Tiningham, had given to him. He was buried at Lindisfarne in a stone coffin on the right side of the Altar. After eleven years the brethren wished to take up his bones, expecting to be able to place them in a shrine above ground so that they could venerate them. They obtained permission to do this from Bishop Eadbert. But on opening the coffin they found the Saint lying as one alive, but in a deep sleep. They hastened to tell the Bishop of this wonder, and then they reverently placed the Saint in a new coffin above the pavement of the Sanctuary. After a while the warlike Danes so harried the people and laid waste the country that in 875 the monks of Lindisfarne, together with the lay folk who dwelt on the island, were obliged to fly for safety. They took with them the precious coffin contain-

## Sbrines of the Saints

ing the body of Cuthbert, and some other relics. First going to Northumbrian hills, they wandered about in terror lest their sacred burden should be hurt and themselves killed by the fierce Danes. Up and down they wandered, begging their bread, despairing at last of finding any safe place in England where their weary feet might rest and the relics be safe. So they thought they would go to Ireland.

At the mouth of the Derwent, in Cumberland, they were to meet a ship to take them there. Now, Bishop Eardulf had told the elder monks of this plan, but kept it from the younger monks and laymen. The body of S. Cuthbert was carried on board, the senior monks embarked. The sails filled with wind, and the ship slowly made her way to the sea, leaving a wailing group of monks and lay people on the shore. But ere long a storm arose, and the wind drove the vessel back. S. Cuthbert would not leave any of those devoted men in loneliness, it was thought. And before they could land, the Book of the Gospels, which had been placed on the coffin, fell overboard and disappeared from sight. The Bishop and the elder monks then acknowledged their fault, and the younger monks forgave them. Not so the lay folk, however, who deserted that little company. The book which had fallen into the sea was washed ashore after a while, and is now preserved in the British Museum, in London.

In the spring of 883 the faithful monks reached a place

## Notes

called Chester-le-Street. Here a Cathedral of wood was built, and Eardulf became the first Bishop. In 995 the Danes again disturbed the country; again it became necessary that the Shrine of the Saint should be removed for safety, and once more the wandering with the body began. They tried to get to Lindisfarne, but on the way the cart containing the coffin became immovable—no effort could stir it. The monks prayed and fasted for three days, when it was revealed to them that the Saint wished to be taken to Dunholme. But where was Dunholme? No one knew that.

But presently they heard a woman in the distance calling to a neighbour. "Have you seen my cow?" she asked, and the neighbour said, "Yes, the cow had strayed to *Dunholme*." Then the monks followed the woman, and she led them to Dunholme, now called Durham.

And this story is commemorated on the outside of the north-west pinnacle of the famous Cathedral, above the Nine Altars Chapel, by carvings of the woman and her cow. At Durham, then, the Saint's bones had rest. In Henry VIII's reign the Shrine was destroyed and the body of the Saint laid in the ground. From time to time the coffin has been opened, the last time being in 1899, on March the 1st, when the grave was opened to take away the fragments of the ancient coffin made by the monks in 698. A new oaken chest was then made to contain the relics, and they were restored to the grave on March 17th, 1899.

## Shrines of the Saints

(4) There is little known about *S. Guthlac's Shrine*. When he died in 714, Eadburgh, Abbess of Repton, where he had been trained, sent a shroud and a leaden coffin for him in memory of his former connection with her Abbey. Many pilgrims visited Saint Guthlac's Shrine and left jewels and offerings, so that it became very rich. It had to be protected from the Danes, and not until the 12th century could a more fitting Shrine be erected. In 1136 the relics were put into a Shrine of wood covered with plates of gold and silver. And in 1195 the relics were put into yet another Shrine, still more worthy of so great a Saint.

(5) In the royal burial ground at Iona *Saint Columba* was laid to rest. At the beginning of the 9th century the Abbot of Iona carried the relics to Kells, in Ireland, and they were put into one of the beautiful Irish Shrines. We learn that this Shrine was in the Church of Saint Patrick, County Down, in 807. It was afterwards carried to Iona. From Iona the Danes, hearing of its richness, tried to steal it. When the monks saw the Danish ships approaching, they dug a hole in the turf and buried the Shrine. The Danes then slew many of them for refusing to tell where they had hidden the precious relics. In 850 Keneth MacAlpin built a Church at Scone, and removed the Shrine thither. In 878 it was again in Ireland, remaining there, it is supposed, until it was seized by the Danes of Dublin in the 12th century. The Shrine then disappeared, and was never seen again, though the relics were given back.

## Notes

(6) At Bobio, in the old Church dedicated to him, is the Shrine of *Saint Columban*, although there was an Arm Shrine of S. Columban at Luxeuil, which was destroyed during the French Revolution.

(7) *Saint Hugh* was taken from London to Lincoln, and during the four days' journey the tapers round the Bier burnt continually, never going out, although the weather was often stormy, with tempests of wind and rain.

At Lincoln his body was enshrined. The Shrine was robbed of its riches in the reign of Henry VIII. After the Restoration, Bishop Fuller erected a memorial over the spot where the relics of the Saint were supposed to have been buried ; but when search was made in 1886 nothing more was found than an unsoldered leaden coffin, within one of stone, containing decayed fragments of some rich material.

## SOME WORDS EXPLAINED

It has been thought that an explanation of some of the words used in the Legend might be useful to little readers.

*Abbot*.—The male head or superior of a monastery or abbey.

*Bedesman*.—A man employed in praying, usually for others. The word comes from the Anglo-Saxon *bed* or *bead*, a prayer.

*Bishop*.—A member of the highest order in the Church. From the Anglo-Saxon *biscop*. Greek, *episcopus*, an overseer.

*Clerk*.—A man in Holy Orders, a priest. From the Anglo-Saxon word *clerc*, a priest.

*Convent*.—A house for persons devoted to the religious life.

*Crypt*.—That part of a cathedral or church, underneath the floor, where monuments are placed and bodies buried. From the Latin *crypta*. From Greek *kripto*, to hide.

*Effigy*.—The image or representation of a person or thing.

*Episcopal dignity*.—The honourable rank belonging to a bishop.

*Hermit*.—A person who lives alone, away from other men.

*Oratory*.—A place set apart for prayer.

*Prebend's stall*.—That seat in a cathedral church belonging to a prebendary or canon.

## Some Words Explained

*Prior*.—A monk next in dignity to an abbot. The head of a priory. A priory is a religious house, below an abbey in dignity.

*Relic*.—A bone or other fragment of the body or garments of a saint or martyr kept in remembrance of the saint.

*Refectory*.—An eating-room. The place in convents where meals were served.

*Rood*.—The cross of Christ. From Anglo-Saxon *rod*, a cross.

*Stigmata*.—Marks said to have been impressed upon the bodies of certain persons, in imitation of the wounds of our Lord.

*Transfiguration*.—A change of form or appearance.

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The following books have been made use of in the compilation of the Legends and Notes :

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